

"Home Made Beverages"

IN *Home Made Beverages* Albert A. Hopkins has written something more than a cook book supplement or a bartender's guide. As he says in his preface, he hopes that the volume will appeal at once to the pros and the anti's, "for herein will be found everything from strong wine to lemonade." A whole chapter is devoted to cider, concerning the chemistry of which there appears to be a remarkable curiosity in certain quarters, and another chapter to wine making. The gentle but unregenerate run-away may find solace in the paragraph which tells how to make imitation sherry wine from new cider and honey. The soft side of the book is carefully done; for example, there are three pages on the construction of sundaes. The author, who is on the *Scientific American* staff, goes deeply into the laboratory end of the game.

HOME MADE BEVERAGES. By ALBERT A. HOPKINS. New York: Scientific American Publishing Company. \$1.25.

"The Second Bullet"

THE author of *The Second Bullet* introduces the reader on page 1 to the mysterious and beautiful Mrs. Hartshorne, rushes her through suspicion and love affairs for thirty pages and then shows her dead on the floor of her small but perfectly appointed house, with a "sinister dark stain" on her corsage and a small, blunt nosed revolver beside her. The weapon is a relief, for it is the first mystery story in a long while wherein the victim—unless taken off with a strange Oriental poison—hasn't been shot up with an automatic pistol. This, however, is beside the issue. Mrs. Hartshorne is dead, and there are 250 pages to go. Of course the author prepared for this by having two or three characters who were jealous of the lady.

When we mention some of the chapter headings it will be seen that this is a regular mystery book: *Questions; A String of Pearls; The Cartridge Shell; Lies; Where Death Lurked; The Warning; The Face at the Window; The Torn Card; The Knock Upon the Door and Jacques Benoit Laughs Last*. The plot is as complicated as a league covenant.

THE SECOND BULLET. By ROBERT ORR CHIFFERFIELD. Robert M. McBride & Co. \$1.50.

Two Books for Lovers of Mystery Stories

By HARRY ESTY DOUNCE.

THE Virginian reviewed a detective story: "Can y'u guess the murderer, or is the author too smart for y'u? Well, he was too smart for me, but it didn't worry me none."

We need not go with him in disparaging all such fiction. An honestly good detective story is a valuable thing. But he did put his finger on the sine qua non; the reader should be kept guessing. And then I, for one, prefer characters who are credible human beings. That is the great merit of the Sherlock Holmes tales. As a reasoner Holmes himself is a pretense. But as a character he is or at one time was worth while, and almost every one he dealt with, including the honest Watson, was drawn with an agreeable human touch. I wish Mrs. Rinehart would write some more detective stories!

The author of *The Mystery of the Summer House*, a flat and stupid title, has made efforts to satisfy tastes like mine in characterization. His detective is live, and begins well, and two or three other people are sketched in a way that reminded me, faintly, of Frank Danby. And he is wise in choosing what might be called a normal murder instead of an attack of the fantasies or the scientific. After the loathsome Craig Kennedy yarns any author is to be thanked for that. And up to a certain point he keeps me guessing. He might have done it to the end if he had not thrown in quite so many bald hints, and turned the detective aside on a scent a child would know as false. If fond of detective stories, and not too fastidious for your own good, you will find *The Mystery* a means of passing an evening. At the point where the old maid narrator finds Sergeant Crisp's gimlet eye unsupportable and begs him to turn it off and he mournfully apologizes that he has made resolutions to remember to be more human, but "there is no improvement" and his is a loathsome profession, you may think of Gilbert and Sullivan.

The adventures of Jimmie Dale, of which a second batch is now published, are rattling bad stories. I wonder who reads

them. They are too well written for devotees of Nick Carter and too useless for any one else. This Fifth Avenue clubman-burglar, alias a dope fiend artist, alias a yegg turned stool pigeon, alias the mysterious genius of crime (interchanging these roles with a makeup box on half a minute's notice), disporting himself in a village lounge's dream of a New York "underworld," where everybody but he turns out when killed or arrested to be somebody else, where "ottomatticks" (Penrod's spelling) are thrust into all faces at every turn, where mysterious notes of warning are laced with dots and hiatuses—

And yet any amount of ability goes into the manufacture of Jimmie Dale. Mr. Packard can write, and, discounting dashes and exclamation points and other cheap tricks for keeping up a fever, he really has the priceless gift of telling a complex dramatic story with speed and force. He could do ninety times better than Jimmie Dale if he liked.

And so I innocently wonder why he doesn't like. If he wants to make money easily, why not devote that copious gimcrack inventiveness to writing for the screen? But if he prefers to write yarns, is there no one to tell him that the variegated yarn will hold all the genuine art you will put into it, and that the more you put in the better the product pays? I don't dote on "society burglars," but if we must have them in fiction, I want mine as well turned out as Raffles, who coined money. Every one who can like Jimmie Dale liked, or could have liked, Raffles, but not every one who liked Raffles will have patience with Jimmie Dale.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SUMMER-HOUSE. By HORACE HUTCHINSON. George H. Doran Company. \$1.50.
ADVENTURES OF JIMMIE DALE. By FRANK L. PACKARD. George H. Doran Company. \$1.50.

"Words, Words, Words"

By GEORGE GORDON.

WRITING to me some time ago concerning style in fiction, Mr. James Lane Allen said: "The second requisite—next to an abundant classic vocabulary—is an ear for music, and no one can teach an ear for music. All the learned professors in the United States who are busily and uselessly engaged in teaching the young English style should begin by giving them an ear for music. Style is music. There are few natural musicians and few stylists."

All of which, positive and dogmatic as it seems, is but the expression of ill-considered personal opinion. I am not as yet convinced that style—such a dressing up of words as Mr. Allen uses—is of prime importance in the novel. Indeed there be some who believe that Meredith concerned himself too deeply in the turn of phrase—that Henry James rather obscured his thought in an unqualified exercise of modifying clauses—that the simplicity of ordinary speech is to be desired above the painted beauty of a conscious playing for effect.

Writing of Balzac in 1899, Mr. Arthur Symonds said: "I have often considered whether, in the novel, perfect form is a good, or even a possible thing, if the novel is to be what Balzac made it, history added to poetry. A novelist with style will not look at life with an entirely naked vision. He sees through colored glasses. Human life and human manners are too various, too moving, to be brought into the fixity of a quite formal order. There will come a moment, constantly, when style must suffer or the closeness and clearness of narration must be sacrificed, some minute exception of action or psychology must lose its natural place or its full emphasis. Balzac, with his rapid and accumulating mind, without the patience of selection and without the desire to select where selection means leaving out something good in itself, if not good in its place, never hesitates, and his parenthesis comes in. And often it is into these parentheses that he puts the profoundest part of his thought."

Mr. Allen (the beauty of whose prose has been praised by all to whom the green of stagnant pools is rather lovelier than the shapeless and changing rush of mountain streams) has forced his dreams into a mould of form that dwarfs the reflection of life to a miniature painted from a mirror. Style, indeed! Mr. Allen should know that one-half of humanity is naturally musical—he has but to go to a dance hall and watch the perfect time of the dancers, to listen to a darky singing in the cornfield—and that stylists are as abundant as blackberries in June.

Style! It is fast becoming the bane

of American letters. It is the spoil of Mr. Francis Hackett as a critic—Mr. Hackett who, could he care as much for what he says as for his way of saying it, might be reckoned among the great. It

was the ruin of Mr. Hergesheimer's *Java Head*, which lies buried beneath a weight of polished and decorated sentences, motionless, the mummy of romance. It is the curse of present day verse.

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